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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies

Statement submitted by People of Good Heart, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES AND challenges TO SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH FISCAL, WAGES AND SOCIAL PROTECTION.

The gulf between the "haves" and the "haves not" in societies around the world is at alarmingly high rate, Nigeria, as a test case, assumes a greater gulf between the rich and poor.

According to the leveller, quoting from an English man's birthright: " seeing all are by nature sons of Adam, and from him have legitimately derived a natural priority right and freedom, therefore England and indeed all nations and all particular persons in every nations, notwithstanding the difference of laws and governments, ranks and degrees, ought to be alike, free and estated in their natural liberties and to enjoy the just rights and prerogative of mankind."

Wherewith heir apparent and commoners, by right, are equal with the lords, from the above quotation it is therefore right to say that an egalitarian society is what is desirable. To achieve this goal, the society should endeavor to practically engage in social, fiscal and wages policies that will tend towards bridging the gap between the rich and poor and minimizing their inequalities. The following steps are suggested to be taken.

1. SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: The social status in the society has elevated the rich to a position where the poor cannot stand. The poor are made to serve the rich and as such the inequality is conspicuous. Imagine a situation where elections are held for a position of authority such as president or a governor of a State, and political parties ordered any party members that are interested in serving tin political offices to pay a huge sum of money that cannot be afforded by the poor, thereby widening the margin of inequality between the two categories of people. This would be, very outrageous and would not help to bridge the gap as expected. Similarly, when picking positions of authority such as ministers, commissioners, special assistants and the like, the elites are considered first, but in a situation where this gap is to be bridged, the common man in the society should be given priority. A situation where a person with lofty ideas that will improve the standard of living of the populace is neglected due to the fact that he or she is poor, and a man with no idea is picked due to the fact that the former cannot afford the stipulated amount to be contributed to the parties. Democracy is a government of the people by the people, and not government of few elites. Steps should be taken towards promoting activities that will include the common man in the ruling government.

The grassroot people should be given priority in the selection of people in offices.

2. WAGES: Wages are the amount of stipend/money received by an individual for services rendered. The highest paid worker should be the person that puts in the highest energy/ hours in his/her work. This is not so in the society now, hour/ energy is not given priority in the paying wages/salary, what is given priority is the level of education and the position of the worker in the society. The salary of an ordinary councillor in the society is higher than the factory worker, whereas the former may be just putting very minimum hour in his daily work, as compared to a factory worker who may work for about 6–8 hours in a day. In order to promote equality and discourage inequality, priority should be given to the nature of work being done and the hours, on the job. Training should also be encouraged so that workers may advance to higher positions, thereby increasing their wage. Moreover,

when government at federal, state and local levels are appointing people to political offices, the masses should be given priority.

3. FISCAL POLICIES: Fiscal policies in the country should be so tailored to favor the masses as against the few elites. The peasant farmers and all other low-income earners should be exempted from payment of taxes in order to boost their income, appropriate taxes should be placed on the high income earners and those who are used to luxurious life, people who are engaged in manufacturing and extractive business should be made to pay high taxes. This should be extended to high income yielding ventures.

The situation of people who are building gigantic buildings all over the country are being made to pay token as tax should be discouraged. What is obtainable in the advanced country should be spread to all countries in the world. Allowance or stipends should be given to the unemployed, the widows and all other less privileged people such as persons with disabilities and victims of disasters. Discounts should also be given to the people on every item purchased to enable a better standard of live and to reduce the gap of inequality in the society.